

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 HEW-08 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DPW-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /140 W

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R 091210Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8159

INFO CINCPAC

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17557

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: RIVALRIES WITHIN THE NSCT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: BANGKOK 16642

SUMMARY: DISAGREEMENTS AND RIVALRIES WHICH HAVE BEEN PRE-SENT WITHIN THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND HAVE RECENTLY BECOME MORE PUBLIC. DIFFERENCES IN STUDENT LEADERS' APPROACHES TO THE THAI POLITICAL FUTURE ARE COUPLED WITH MISUNDERSTANDINGS OVER EVENTS ON OCTOBER 14. SEKSAN PRASERTKUL, A POPULAR STUDENT LEADER, HAS RESIGNED HIS POSITION WITHIN THE NSCT AND ESTABLISHED HIS OWN ORGANIZATION, BUT THIS IS HARDLY THE COUP DE GRACE TO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT THE NEWSPAPERS PORTRAY. END SUMMARY.

1. DISAGREEMENTS AND RIVALRIES HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED WITHIN THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT). THE BANGKOK PRESS, HOWEVER, IS NOW GIVING PARTICULAR PLAY TO THESE DIFFERENCES. THE PRIMARY CHALLENGE TO THE FACADE OF NSCT UNITY COMES FROM FORMER NSCT SECRETARY-GENERAL THIRAYUDH BOONMEE, AND FROM SEKSAN PRASERTKUL. THE IMMEDIATE DISAGREEMENTS STEM FROM THE DIFFERENT

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ROLES THESE INDIVIDUALS PLAYED IN THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE FALL

OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT AND IN THEIR SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES.

2. THIRAYUDH BOONMEE, AFTER GRADUATION THIS YEAR, BECAME ONE OF THE ORGANIZERS OF THE EARLY CONSTITUTION MOVEMENT (ECM) WITHOUT NSCT ENDORSEMENT, THE ECM BEGAN A PAMPHLETEERS AND SPARKED THE MID-OCTOBER EVENTS. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT NSCT LEADERS WERE NOT PLEASED THAT THIRAYUDH'S GROUP HAD COMMITTED THEM TO A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THIRAYUDH HAS RECENTLY TRAVELLED WITH A STUDENT GROUP TO PROVINCES IN NORTH THAILAND TO TALK TO OFFICIALS AND STUDENTS. ALTHOUGH THE SANYA GOVERNMENT HAS USED HIM IN A LIAISON ROLE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND STUDENTS, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE NSCT LEADERS FULLY APPROVE OF THIS LATEST USE OF THEIR NAME. THIRAYUDH HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL RETURN TO THE ECM AND SUPPORT THE NEW DEMOCRATIC ERA WITH A

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN. THERE MAY BE SOME GRUMBLING ABOUT THIRAYUDH'S USE OF THE NSCT TO BUILD UP A FOLLOWING WHICH HE MAY TRY TO ENTICE INTO HIS OWN ORGANIZATION.

3. SEKSAN PRASERTKUL HAD DIFFERENCE WITH THE NSCT LEADERSHIP BEFORE THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS. HE HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN UNDER ATTACK FOR HIS ACTIONS IN MANEUVERING THE STUDENT THROG FROM THE DEMOCRACY MONUMENT TO THE PALACE AREA WHERE VIOLENCE FIRST OCCURRED. SPEAKING DEFENSIVELY, SAID THAT HE SOUGHT ASSISTANCE FROM THE PALACE TO HELP HIM OFF THE "TIGER'S BACK". THE WORDS BETWEEN SEKSAN AND THE NSCT LEADERSHIP THAT NIGHT WERE PARTICULARLY ACrimonious. ONE OF LT. GENERAL SAIYUD KERDPHOL'S FIRST TASKS AS LIAISON WITH THE NSCT WAS TO PATCH UP DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEKSAN AND THE NSCT. AS BANGKOK BEGAN TO SETTLE DOWN, SEKSAN BECAME THE UNOFFICIAL LEADER OF THE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDENTS. HE APPARENTLY WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN SUPPORTING THEIR INTERESTS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT DOMINATED NSCT, AND A PROPOSED MERGER NEVER MATERIALIZED.

4. DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH TO THE THAI POLITICAL FUTURE ARE COUPLED WITH THE ABOVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS. AS A GRADUATE, THIRAYUDH CAN HAVE NO OFFICIAL ROLE IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT EXCEPT TO SIPHON STUDENT SUPPORTERS INTO THE ECM, ALTHOUGH TO DATE THE ANNOUNCED EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF THE ECM ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE

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NSCT. SEKSAN, HOWEVER, IS MORE OF AN ACTIVIST AND APPARENTLY FEELS THAT BOTH PRESSURE AND POPULAR EDUCATION ARE NEEDED TO SECURE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS RESIGNED HIS PUBLIC AFFAIRS APPOINTMENT IN THE NSCT AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL ORGANIZE A FREE THAMMASAT GROUP. IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR WHAT SEKSAN WILL DO, BUT HE HAS BEEN INTERVIEWED IN THE NEWSPAPERS AS SAYING THAT DEMOCRACY IS NOT SECURE AS LONG AS POWER REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF THE BUREAUCRACIES AND NOT THE PEOPLE.

5. COMMENT: AFTER YEARS OF BUREACRATIC PATERALISM, THAILAND REMAINS A POLITICALLY UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY. MANY STUDENT LEADERS RECOGNIZE THIS AND ARE WILLING TO ASSIST IN BUILDING A RESPECTABLE, RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL STRUCTURE. ALTHOUGH CONDITIONS SPURRED THE

STUDENT MOVEMENT INTO POLITICAL ACTIVISM, THE NSCT REMAINS POLITICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH CAMPUS RELATED ISSUES. ITS PRESENT LEADERSHIP IS NOT INCLINED TOWARD SUSTAINED POLITICAL ACTIVISM. MORE ACTIVIST STUDENTS MAY FIND IT NECESSARY TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE NSCT IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS.
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